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FOR INFORMATION

COUNTRY NOTE**

Multi-country programme recommendation

SUMMARY

The Executive Director presents the country note for the multi-country programme of the Eastern Caribbean (covering Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, the British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and Turks and Caicos Islands) for a programme of cooperation for the period 1998 to 2002.

THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN AND WOMEN

1. All of the countries covered by the multi-country programme have signed and ratified both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, and have prepared or are finalizing their initial reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. They have also achieved the mid-decade goals, except for the goal concerning baby-friendly hospitals, and are on course to achieve the World Summit for Children goals. However, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago, which have only recently become part of the Eastern Caribbean programme, are showing worsening child survival indicators. Trinidad and Tobago's economy has declined steadily since the mid-1980s, and the percentage of households living in poverty has increased from an estimated 3 per cent in 1981 to 22.5 per cent in 1992. In Suriname, the virtual collapse of the economy has led to the decrease of the gross national product per capita from $3,000 in 1992 to less than $1,000.

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* E/ICEF/1997/2.

** An addendum to the present report containing the final country programme recommendation will be submitted to the Executive Board for approval at its third regular session of 1997.

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2. Even the better-off countries face economic slow-down and uncertainty and a looming collapse of preferential trade agreements for their exports. Past achievements have not been consolidated, and because of the extremely vulnerable socio-economic situation, they will be increasingly difficult to sustain.

3. There has been an increase of reported cases of child abuse and violence against women. In Saint Lucia, the number of reported cases of child sexual/physical abuse and negligence/abandonment in 1994 were 10 and 20 times higher, respectively, than in 1984. The incidence of AIDS among the young is high, with one AIDS-related death occurring every three days in Barbados alone. Similar trends exist in arrests of children (especially teenage boys) for drug offences and theft, and pregnancy among ever younger girls. Among the causes are the breakdown of the traditional family system because of economic pressure, particularly on women, who now head one half of the households, together with a lack of job opportunities for youth, 50 per cent of whom are unemployed.

4. Two thirds of the children who enter primary school do not pass the main examination at age 11. The majority of the remaining one third who pass later fail to obtain certification at age 16. These failures are associated with unqualified teachers who use inadequate teaching methods and focus on examinations, coupled with the lack of materials.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM PAST COOPERATION

5. The mid-term review and strategy meeting concluded that prevailing economic and social conditions justify a shift in strategy in the next country programme cycle to a rights-based and integrated programme in order to sustain basic social services and promote child rights. Efforts to promote child rights must include greater popularization of ethics related to child rights at home and through community organizations.

6. The social impact of economic problems in Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago demonstrates the need for close monitoring of social indicators in all countries. In the better-off islands, the remedial measures used to address family breakdown lack preventive interventions in such areas as health and life skills.

7. The previous cooperation has demonstrated the effectiveness of sharing successful national experiences with the other islands. The participation of Caribbean countries in regional forums, such as the 1996 Ministerial meeting on follow-up to the World Summit for Children held in Santiago and the Belize Conference on Child Rights, demonstrates the importance of collective efforts in establishing common policies and strategies to address the problems of children. Similarly, several regional initiatives, financed through the Special Adjustment Facility for Latin America and the Caribbean and other sources, have been emulated successfully at national levels.

PROPOSED COUNTRY PROGRAMME STRATEGY

8. All Governments have set national goals for the reduction and eventual elimination of poverty through sustained economic diversification and targeted social policies. UNICEF will help Governments to consolidate gains in child survival through a mix of strategies that will encompass: (a) institutional capacity-building to strengthen the ability of communities to plan, execute and monitor social interventions; (b) advocacy to heighten social consciousness on child rights and equity; and (c) the mobilization of communities in support of

the Convention on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF assistance to service delivery will be limited to areas in special need or for demonstration purposes. Each programme will have components for monitoring and evaluation, strategic advocacy and communication. The multi-country programme will benefit a population of 2.5 million, of whom 0.9 million are children.

9. The countries will be clustered into three groups for programming purposes. Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname and the Windward Islands of Grenada, Saint Vincent, Dominica and Saint Lucia will focus on the immediate survival needs of children and women, targeting activities to specific underserved population groups. The better socio-economic indicators of Antigua and Barbuda and Saint Kitts and Nevis will warrant more selective targeted support to social planning and monitoring of child rights. UNICEF support in Barbados and the British dependencies of Anguilla, Montserrat and the British Virgin Islands will focus on advocacy and child rights monitoring and subregional initiatives where appropriate. To optimize programme linkages and resources, the multi-country programme will collaborate with multilateral and bilateral agencies.

10. The social investment, planning, monitoring and evaluation programme will help Governments to mobilize and target investment in basic social services, thus improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public expenditure. The programme will help decision makers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and communities gain better access to best practices and strategies in favour of children and women. The Santiago Accord, the Belize Commitment and the 20/20 Initiative will constitute advocacy tools for increased and sustained government prioritization for basic social services. The programme will provide technical assistance for the development of social indicators relevant to children and women, monitoring systems and related training, as well as participatory, community-based situation analyses, monitoring and selective periodic evaluations.

11. Social alienation and underachievement of children in schools will be addressed through the education for child development and participation programme, targeting disadvantaged children through preschool, formal and non-formal school settings. UNICEF will support NGOs and Governments in training and mobilizing day-care, preschool and primary teachers to improve the quality of education. Parents will receive training and information in the use and organization of home-based and community services for early childhood development, and in how to motivate their children to learn. The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and UNICEF will undertake well-focused advocacy and research activities to improve the efficiency of basic education.

12. National child rights committees will be established involving both Governments and NGOs. Technical assistance will be provided to the committees, the judicial system, police and communities under the child rights promotion programme. The objective is to improve institutional coordination among various government departments and NGOs dealing with children and women, through, inter alia, support for the appointment of focal points for child rights. Multisectoral training will be provided, including support to help organizations working with families and communities. The aim is to generate dialogue, expertise and action for children in support of legislative and social reform. The programme will also identify families at risk of abuse and domestic violence, and provide training and counselling of parents and young people for the prevention of exploitation, substance abuse, teenage pregnancies, child pornography, violence and crime against children and women. The Caribbean Community will be involved in all subregional initiatives emanating from the programme.

13. The health and community life promotion programme will target the main survival priorities, especially in Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago, through activities in health, nutrition and sanitation, and through interaction with the Amazon programme in Suriname. These actions will benefit families and individuals at social and economic risk, and will include advocacy and social mobilization as well as technical assistance through community-based mechanisms. The objective is to improve communication among the community, clinic, hospital and schools through training in interactive skills and conflict resolution. It will build on the success of the health and family life education subregional project and will include special emphasis on male participation and gender socialization in collaboration with the University of the West Indies. There will be close collaboration with the Caribbean Food and Nutrition Centre, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Pan American Health Organization, the United Nations Capital Development Programme and the United Nations Information Centre.

ESTIMATED PROGRAMME BUDGET

Estimated programme cooperation, 1998-2002 a/
(In thousands of United States dollars)

	General resources	Supplementary funds	Total
Social investment, planning, monitoring and evaluation	1 500	500	2 000
Education for child development and participation	1 650	1 750	3 400
Child rights promotion	1 250	1 000	2 250
Health and community life promotion	1 600	1 750	3 350
Total	6 000	5 000	11 000

a/ These are indicative figures only which are subject to change once aggregate financial data are finalized.